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Farming Whenua Māori in Tai Tokerau: Pathways to Success.

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Strategic Partners



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Farming Whenua Māori in Tai Tokerau: Pathways to Success.

Ko Wai Au?

Ko Ngātokimatawhaorua te waka

Ko Hokianga nui a Kupe te moana

Ko Whakatere Manawakaiaia te maunga

Ko Waima te awa

Ko Otatara, Moehau me Tuhirangi ngā marae

Ko Ngāpuhi te Iwi

Ko Mahurehure te hapū

Ko Mihi Harris toku ingoa

Foreword

This topic is important to me in my current governance roles and the Māori development sector I work in. It is intended that this research project will directly benefit the owners and beneficiaries of the Waima Topu B Ahu Whenua Trust, Te Mahurehure hapū in Waima and wherever they live. The wider Iwi Māori, regional and business community may also benefit from this research.

Acknowledgements

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legacy responses to improving unproductive land-based assets have failed Māori resulting in only a few high-performing Māori owned land blocks in Tai Tokerau. As such, when engaging in the primary sector, many Māori landowners – Incorporations and Trusts - are often starting from a zero-base or worse. This is particularly the case in the rural community of Waima, Hokianga. Well known constraints to development of whenua Māori include legislative obligations and regulations, under-investment, limited access to finance and opportunities, lack of capability and sometimes fraught relationships. Emerging research is beginning to identify learnings and insights of Māori landowners who have successfully overcome one or many of these constraints to grow high-performing farming operations that thrive both commercially and culturally.

This project is concerned with understanding the learnings and insights specific to Tai Tokerau and how they can inform enduring, sustainable agricultural production systems to unlock opportunities for future generations in Waima.

This report is based on a series of conversations, meetings and a literature review of select sources comprising primary and secondary sources to identify relevant and current content, themes and a brief case study of the Waima Topu B Ahuwhenua Trust.

The report concludes with findings and recommends that are fit for the Tai Tokerau context that encourages collaboration as stepping stone to collectivisation supported by a high-level business case that sets out a pathway for investment.

The purpose is to grow high-performing Māori farms in Tai Tokerau through investment in infrastructure and capability including governance and skills and training; establish and strengthen the relationship between Māori farmers, Crown-owned farms and investors that, in time, allows multiple farms to come together to work collectively to add value to, and de-risk, the value chain from farm gate to whare.

Introduction

Whenua Māori is a taonga tuku iho, a customary practise of tangata whenua where land and natural resources are passed down from generation to generation. Whenua Māori is often described in literature and dialogue as under-performing or under-utilised and commentators repeatedly say that it can almost always be more productive. Attitudes and perceptions problematise whenua Māori and are perpetuated using deeply negative stereotypes that originated in the nineteenth century.

Increasing land productivity for Māori is a means to an end, the end being cultural and spiritual wellbeing. Put another way, the measure of our success will not be our bottom line, but how

happy, healthy and connected our mokopuna (grandchildren and descendants) are to their culture. Land, whenua Māori, is inextricably bound to Māori culture by notions of whakapapa (genealogical connections) and turangawaewae (a place to stand).

Legacy responses to improving unproductive land-based assets have failed Māori resulting in only a few high-performing Māori owned land blocks in Tai Tokerau. As such, when engaging in the primary sector, many Māori landowners – Incorporations and Trusts - are often starting from a zero-base or worse. This is particularly the case in the rural community of Waima, Hokianga. Well known constraints to development of whenua Māori include legislative obligations and regulations, under-investment, limited access to finance and opportunities, lack of capability and sometimes fraught relationships.

This report is based on a series of conversations, meetings and a literature review comprising primary and secondary sources. Due to time constraints the literature review is not exhaustive but is focused on current sector strategies and, as much as possible, sources authored by Māori.

Emerging research is beginning to identify learnings and insights of Māori landowners who have successfully overcome one or many of these constraints to grow high-performing farming operations that thrive both commercially and culturally. Agriculture is a major economic and social contributor to Northland and New Zealand. With the industry as at 2019 accounting for 31.8% of Northland's exports and contributing \$720.82m to Northland's GDP.¹ Māori have continuously strived to engage and be successful in this sector but, historically, have been shutout.

This project is concerned with understanding the learnings and insights specific to Tai Tokerau and how they can inform enduring, sustainable agricultural and horticultural production systems to unlock opportunities for future generations in Waima. In fact, Tai Tokerau has a rich history of cross-cultural, Māori and European, engagement in agrarian farming that began in 1830 with the establishment of the Waimate Mission station and model farm in 1830. It was established by the Church Missionary Society to instruct Māori in European farming techniques while promoting the Christian way of life. The land in the area showed great potential according to the early accounts below.²

In 1835, Charles Darwin visited the Bay of Islands and on the walk to Waimate the naturalist noted again how:

¹ Extension 350 Annual Report 2019 – 2020, p.6

² Tanira Kingi, 'Ahuwhenua – Māori land and agriculture - Changes to Māori agriculture', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/ahuwhenua-maori-land-and-agriculture/page-1> (accessed 27 October 2021)

“the whole scene in spite of its green colour, had rather a desolate aspect’, and his scientific imagination was once more at work. He thought at first that the presence of so much fern meant that the land must be sterile, but later discovered that ‘wherever the fern grows thick and beast-high, the land by tillage becomes productive.’... At Waimate there are three large houses, where the missionary gentlemen ... reside; and near them are the huts of the native labourers. On an adjoining slope, fine crops of barley and wheat were standing in full ear; and in another part, fields of potatoes and clover.... All this is very surprising, when it is considered that five years ago nothing but the fern flourished here”.³

Augustus Earle, an early colonial artist, describes an impressive agrarian scene in 1837:

“At mid-day we arrived at what in New Zealand is considered a town of great size and importance, called Ty-a-my [Taiamai, as in Waimate North or the area known locally as Waimate-Taiamai]. It is situated on the sides of a beautiful hill, the top surmounted by a par, in the midst of a lonely and extensive plain, covered with plantations of Indian corn, cumera [kumara], and potatoes. This is the principal inland settlement, and, in point of quiet beauty and fertility, it equalled any place I had ever seen in the various countries I have visited. Its situation brought forcibly to my remembrance the scenery around Canterbury. We found the village totally deserted, all the inhabitants being employed in their various plantations; they shouted to us as we passed, thus bidding us welcome, but did not leave their occupations to receive us. To view the cultivated parts of this country from an eminence, a person might easily imagine himself in a civilised land; for miles around the village of Ty-a-my nothing but beautiful green fields present themselves to the eye. The exact rows in which they plant their Indian corn would do credit to a first-rate English farmer, and the way in which they prepare the soil is admirable. The greatest deficiency which I observed in the country around me was the total absence of fences; and this defect occasions the natives a great deal of trouble, which might very easily be avoided.”⁴

Methodology

This report includes a literature review of secondary sources to identify relevant content, themes and a brief case study of the Waima Topu B Ahu Whenua Trust. This comprises unstructured conversations with key informants and an exploration of primary source material drawing on the Trust’s collection of historical administrative records held both in the Māori Land Court and its own archives. The material collected focused on the region of Tai Tokerau / Northland and the different experiences of Māori landowners within the context of farming the land.

³ From ‘Darwin at the Bay of Islands’, *The New Zealand Railways magazine*. V9, issue 6 (1 Sep 1934) http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Gov09_06Rail-t1-body-d9-d2.html

⁴ From A. Earle, *A Narrative of Nine Months’ Residence in New Zealand in 1827; Together with a Journal of a Residence in Tristan D’Acunha. An Island Situated Between South America and the Cape of Good Hope*, p. 83-85.

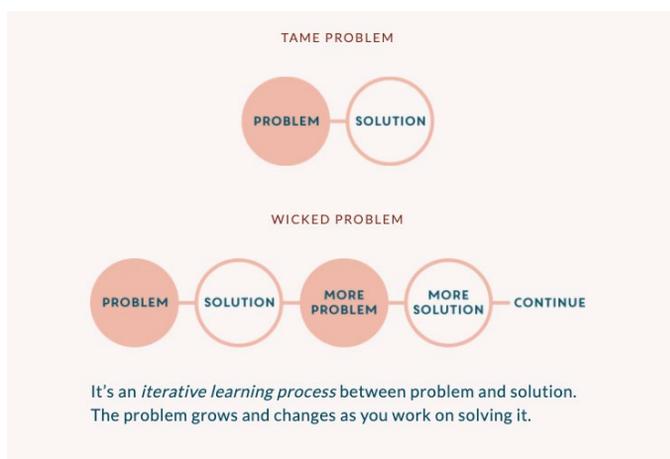


Figure 1: Tame Problem, Wicked Problem

The report concludes with findings and recommends the development of a high-level business case setting out a pathway for investment in collectivisation with other whenua Māori farmers, partnership with Crown agencies, Crown-owned farms and investors.

Purpose

The main purpose of this report is to identify successful Māori farming enterprises to better understand and improve land management and performance. Framing this examination away from the deficit-thinking approach is an opportunity to reconstruct the narrative about Māori land. This negative bias has resulted in descriptors of Māori land such as waste land, unproductive, under-utilised or mainstream thinking that views whenua Māori in terms of what it lacks. This has led to negative stereo-types that problematise Māori land and throw up a myriad of barriers for Māori landowners. This type of bias assumes the problems are inherent in the land, not the sector or the system.

Regardless, Māori land owners face many challenges and a solution, or a range of culturally grounded solutions, is needed. This leads to a clearly definable but multi-faceted question: How can we learn from past efforts at farming to build successful whenua-based enterprise that improves the wellbeing of our people?

The solution is not immediately apparent and so presents as a 'wicked' problem. A tame problem is one that can be solved by choosing and applying the correct algorithm. A wicked problem, however, is one for which there is no one set of rules to solve it. In fact, the problem grows and changes as you work to solve it. The advantage to tackling wicked problems is to know that there will likely be no complete solution - so don't attempt to 'solve' it; instead form a team to 'design' the future. The challenge is to design a resilient response to the problem that incorporates learning and anticipates growth within the context of an ever changing problem.⁵

Traditional methods for gaining and transferring knowledge (mātauranga) are often explored by whānau, hapū and iwi through hui or wānanga. Collectivising, or bringing a team together, to understand and engage with this wicked problem is one solution.

⁵ Responsibility.com Leadership Skills. Know the Difference Between Wicker and Tame Problems. <https://responsibility.com/wicked-and-tame-problems/>

Literature Review

The literature review is guided by a selection of primary and secondary sources related to whenua Māori in Waima and more generally across Tai Tokerau; and Māori agribusiness specifically farming. There is a large and growing body of research dedicated to this topic. The over-riding theme of most of the literature written prior to the mid-2010s focusses on solving the ‘wicked’ problem of how to turn unproductive, under-performing land into productive, high performing businesses. Much of this research is commissioned by Crown agencies such as Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK). The research was largely undertaken by large consultancy companies based in the cities of Auckland and Wellington. Unsurprisingly, the main driver is to lift Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through utilisation and productivity gains.

More recently, contributions from Māori academics, scientists, farmers and leaders have shaped a more diverse, values-based approach mixing entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability. One such article by Matthew Rout, John Reid and Jason Mika *Māori agribusinesses: the whakapapa network for success* analyses the 20% of Māori land incorporations and trusts classified as high performing to identify what enabled their success but to also determine any remaining constraints.⁶

The authors use thematic analysis to refine and explore themes. The five key themes explored are:

- legal framework (whakaritenga);
- finance (huamoni);
- capability (matatau);
- relationships (whakawhanaungatanga); and
- paths to market (whakaritenga).

According to the authors many of the findings ‘corroborate industry best practice’ but they also found provisional evidence of the role of whakapapa networks – that is, formal or informal Māori collectives – in the success of Māori land trusts. Accordingly, much could be learned from the National Science Challenge, Our Land and Water, Toitu te Whenua Toi Ora te Wai (OLW) success-based approach to identify and exploit the strengths inherent in these operations.

In Tai Tokerau, much of the literature is still focussed on reports, strategies and action plans focussed on bringing unproductive and under-utilised Māori land into production.⁷ Simon Hunter, Roger Wilson, Joe Hanita and Riria Te Kanawa (KPMG) research identified over 3,900 land blocks, representing 84,000ha of land within a 50km radius of Kaikohe. In their view, the breadth and scope of land available in the mid-North of Tai Tokerau provides ‘diverse

⁶ M. Rout, Reid, John., Mika, Jason, *Māori agribusinesses: the whakapapa network for success*, 2020/08/13.

AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples, vol 16, 10.1177/1177180120947822.

⁷ S. Hunter, Wilson. R, Hanita. J, and Te Kanawa. R (KPMG), *Mid-North (Northland) Multiple Māori and Blocks*. May 2015.

options and compelling evidence for improvement and / or bringing land blocks into production'. Leveraging the opportunity to bring land close to Kaikohe into horticultural or pastoral production, through collectivisation, would provide a basis for discussion, problem-solving and profit.

The guiding principles of the report are the need for Māori to retain ownership of land, allowing for different levels of development and recognising the cultural aspiration of landowners and communities. An important principle, not thoroughly traversed in their report, is the notion of whanaungatanga. The practice of establishing links and making connections in culturally appropriate ways ie through whakapapa, whenua or other relationships. Concepts such as whanaungatanga and turangawaeawae, in many ways, are an ancient form of succession planning that enables linkages and connections to whenua to be established and maintained.

The building blocks for improved land productivity and improving social outcomes have been known for many decades, however, Māori incorporations, trusts and landowners continue to face head winds. According to Hunter et al, one thing is for sure, 'maintaining the status quo is not a desirable or sustainable option'.⁸

Surveying the literature specific to Tai Tokerau and Māori agribusiness, more generally, a set of core issues, both barriers and enablers arise. They are:

- a) Investment and finance (huamoni);
- b) Capability (matatau) – governance and workforce skills and training;
- c) Water access;
- d) Legal framework (whakaritenga);
- e) Relationships (whakawhanaungatanga); and
- f) Paths to market (whakaritenga).

Tai Tokerau themes are specific to:

- a) Investment in infrastructure
- b) Water access
- c) Skills and training
- d) Governance capability

David Armstrong in a report commissioned by Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) in 2020 assesses the current position as being one where Māori landowners continue to face a range of problems involving governance structures and administrative processes, a shortage of skills and experience, and difficulties in raising development finance.⁹

⁸ Hunter et al, 2015. p.9

⁹ Armstrong, D.A., 'The Provincial Growth Fund and Maori Economic Development: The Historical Context', Historyworks, September 2020

Fragmentation of ownership, or the number of owners per title, on average has continued to rise. It is now around 100, up from 85 in 2010. The majority of blocks are still not covered by any administrative structures, but the majority of land that is managed is managed by trusts and incorporations. Some 52% of the total land is said to be managed today by Ahu Whenua trusts.²⁶⁸ It is estimated that 80% of freehold Māori land remains under-utilised. In a 2017 article Richard Boast observed that, Māori freehold land;

‘has numerous administrative and financial problems associated with it, of which the most serious is proliferation of small interests. The current pattern is for most Maori people to own an array of tiny shares, some of them quite literally worthless - in a monetary sense - in a large number of blocks’.¹⁰

Colin Fitzpatrick, Co-Chair of Waima Topu B Trust articulates both the problem and the solution:

‘Some of these people’s shares are getting so small that they lose interest in the land. As a Trust its up to us to try to bring them back...to make it easier for the people to come back to the whenua’.¹¹

These landholdings bring whānau into governance early, even if only sitting at the feet of elders.

The 2015 Mid-Northland case study by Hunter et al illustrates a number of problems currently faced by Māori landowners. The study, involving widely dispersed Māori freehold land within a 50km radius of Kaikohe, included 3,986 small land blocks (averaging 21ha) totalling 84,003ha. Much of this land was under-utilised but had potential for horticultural and pastoral development which would ‘enhance the health, wealth and wellbeing of whānau and local communities’.

Title fragmentation and the lack of management structures were the main difficulties. The average number of owners per block was 63, and only 26% of total area possessed a management structure. Setting up some form of ‘collective’ farming system was seen as the only option.

¹⁰ R. Boast. ‘Maori Land and Land Tenure in New Zealand: 150 Years of the Maori Land Court’. *Comparative Law Journal of the Pacific*. 23. 2017. 99.

¹¹ Waima Topu B Trust and Provincial Growth Fund promotional video, December 2019

'Mid-Northland' land blocks; size, owners and management structures²⁷³

<i>Size</i>	<i>Total area</i>	<i>No. of parcels</i>	<i>Average size of blocks</i>	<i>Average number of owners</i>	<i>Blocks with management structure known to be in place</i>
0ha-20ha	12,431ha	3,125	4ha	38	766
20ha-60ha	20,642	605	35ha	77	163
60ha-120ha	12,529ha	155	81ha	124	47
120ha-200ha	7,383ha	51	145ha	320	23
200ha-2,980ha	31,019ha	50	620ha	1,074	33

Figure 2: 'Mid Northland' land blocks; size, owners and management structures¹²

The 'common to all' issues are investment in infrastructure and capability.

b) Water Access

Water access, storage specifically, is an issue for the overall population in Tai Tokerau and the Far North. In the Hokianga, there is a high presence of fresh water and areas with 1-3 LUC have good water bodies around them. However, usability is determined by the Northern Regional Council (NRC). The northern climate provides a distinct market advantage with earlier lambing and finishing of stock to take advantage of new season pricing.¹³

c) Skills and Training

The Te Hiku Farming Collective's approach to skills and training is set out in the section about the collective below. The Red Meat Profit Partnership 'Māori Engagement Strategy Report' outlines its approach to attracting and training young Māori people and dedicated workstreams '... aimed to provide a pathway for young Māori people to learn within land-based topics, from a young age to maturity.'¹⁴

d) Governance capability

In order to transition from fragmented unproductive to connected, productive land it is suggested that the real challenge is not the physical transition (the ability to achieve physical change has already been proven by other organisations) but the organisational change required to make this happen.¹⁵ In Hunter et al's assessment the future potential would see production and workforce double and revenue more than triple.

¹² Hunter et al. p.27. Source Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI); Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), Ethan Hohneck

¹³ Hunter et al pp.34-35.

¹⁴ Brenton-Rule. T., 'Red Meat Profit Partnership Māori Engagement Strategy Report', Sept 2020. Red Meat Profit Partnership.

¹⁵ Hunter et al p.8. Unfortunately, details about the other organisations who have proven this is possible haven't been provided.

Table 1: Assessment of future farming potential of the mid-North ¹⁶

State	Kg meat	Revenue	Jobs
Current (C.2015)	3.3m	\$13m	<100
Future	6.6m (or 100% increase)	\$48m	<250

Similarly, Brenton-Rule writing for the Red Meat Production Partnership provides statistics for the June 2018 financial year (See Table 2 below) and observes that the numbers;

“understate the true importance of the Māori sheep and beef sector as the average size of Māori sheep and beef farms in this sector is about 4.5 times larger than non-Māori farms, and the productivity of the largest Māori farms (typically incorporations) in the sector ranks very highly compared to sector averages, despite their often being on lower quality land - a fact that speaks to the high quality of their governance and management and reinforces the observation that behavioural, capability and management factors are central to determining on-farm performance.”¹⁷

Table 2: Proportion of pastoral livestock farmed by Māori ¹⁸

Proportion of the total number of:			
Sheep	Beef Cattle	Breeding Cows & Heifers	Dairy Cows
3.1%	3.4%	4.4%	1.3%

Growth will be driven by Northland communities, businesses and agencies working together to strengthen connections across the region and primary sectors supported by MPI who’s role is in advice and supporting access to grants and funding.

Currently, there are many more Crown agencies than Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) occupying this space including Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and its Provincial Development Unit (PDU), and Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK). Since the pandemic, other welcome support has been provided to build community capacity and pandemic recovery planning through the Ministry for Social Development (MSD) and Te Ara Whiti (Office for Māori Crown Relationships). Clearly, at this time, there are many agencies all actively engaged in the primary sector in Tai Tokerau.

Crown-owned Assets

Research in the area of lifting farming productivity in Tai Tokerau is largely focussed on land and assets owned and managed by Māori and excludes assets such as Crown State Owned Enterprise (Landcorp Farming Limited), and Crown-owned entities such as Callaghan

¹⁶ Ibid, p.8.

¹⁷ Brenton-Rule. T., ‘Red Meat Profit Partnership Māori Engagement Strategy Report’, Sept 2020. p.5.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.5.

Innovation, Crown Research Institutes, Kainga Ora: Homes and Communities, NZ Trade and Enterprise). Māori Trustee (Tumu Paeroa) and a recently established Crown-owned company, trading as Tupu Tonu the Ngāpuhi Sovereign Fund, in my opinion, have an important role to play to invest and develop commercially viable opportunities and grow people, talent and leadership. Connecting with Crown-owned entities and enterprises across the region, and partnering with intent, could significantly strengthen economic engagement and social opportunities in Tai Tokerau.

Landcorp or Pāmu farms in Tai Tokerau comprise the following farms: Mangatoa, Puketotara, Kapiro, Takou Bay Dairy Unit and Takakuri. The table below provides a brief snapshot of these farms.

Table 2: Landcorp Pāmu farms in the mid-North, Tai Tokerau.

Pāmu Farm	Effective ha	Stock mix
Mangatoa	4,200	9000 ewes, 3000 hoggets and 600 calving cows. 5000 bulls and 1200 steers
Puketotara	775 and 1,350 (total)	2550 effective bull beef farm system
Kapiro	2,000	600 cow Rangitane breeding programme, 4000 sheep, 500 dairy grazing, and cropping. ¹⁹
Takou Bay Dairy Unit	470 + 35 (calf-rearing)	1100 cow split calving: bull calves and replacement heifers
Takakuri farm	1,089 plus 600 (bush)	10000 (SU) angus cows, bulls and Romney ewes
TOTAL	8,534	30,000 beef & sheep

Tumu Paeroa and the Māori Trustee

In addition, Tumu Paeroa administer approximately 700+ hectares of whenua Māori within a 50km radius of Kaikohe in support of the Māori trustee. While mainly small holdings this land represents an opportunity to build relationships through whakawhanaungatanga with whānau and hapū owners and the administrator, the Māori Trustee.

Collaboration and Collectivisation in Tai Tokerau

Collectivising for mutual advantage is a distinct characteristic of hapū of the north. In 1835, chiefs (Rangatira) aligned to te wakaminenga (the confederation of tribes) signed He Whakaputanga o Rangatiratanga o Nu Tīreni (the Declaration of Independence). Confederations were formed for other purposes over many centuries. The composition of the confederation of hapū was ever changing. It represented a commitment to act in a collective capacity that reinforced their collective mana.

¹⁹ Reducing cow size, eating quality a focus Sheep flock down, cattle numbers up.
<https://www.waterfordpress.co.nz/agriculture/kapiro-station/>

Extension 350

Extension 350 (E350) focuses on delivering farmer led learning: Farmers learning from farmers. Evidence in the 'Extension 350 Annual Report: 2019 – 2020' suggests that farmer driven advice is more readily accepted by farmers compared to that solely from a rural professional.²⁰

The E350 project takes a collaborative approach to working with farmers from the Far North to southern Northland and is based on 10 clusters of around 35 farms. Each cluster is made up of 5 target teams - 1 Target farm, 1-2 Mentor farmers and 5 Associate farmers. An agri-consultant works closely with the Target and Mentor farmers of each target team and the learnings are passed on to the Associates at meetings throughout the year and via online farmer reporting. It is a five-year project, with 3 intakes - G1 (2017-20), G2 (2018-21) and G3 (2019-22).

At the heart of E350 is a farmer-led, farmer- focused approach and a farmer-to-farmer learning ethos supported by three planks, or focus areas:

- increasing farm profitability,
- improving farmer wellbeing, and
- increasing environmental sustainability.

Multiple focus areas recognise that farming, and farmers are not just about production or profitability. As reported, this approach brings an additional level of complexity and at times requires a different skill set from traditional agri-consulting. The intent of this approach is to enable farmers to recognise the changes that are coming, to both the sector and farms, to learn, change, and adapt at pace. Collaboration and interconnectivity continue to be crucial to E350 across the agri-industry including relationships with multiple partners such as producers (Fonterra), advisors (AgResearch), and funding partners Dairy NZ, Beef and Lamb NZ, Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and Northland Regional Council (NRC), on an ongoing focus.

The E350 project reports that it continues to work with the Target, Mentor and Associate Māori farmers who are part of E350 (it doesn't provide a breakdown of participation) and intentionally collaborated with other agencies such as Te Puni Kōkiri. As a project, it has looked for opportunities to extend the reach and depth of its Māori engagement, and encourage others to address opportunities identified (but outside the project scope and resourcing). Learnings do not evaluate how the project scope and resourcing might have been designed to accommodate this engagement and realise opportunities.

Te Hiku Farming Collective

A recent example of a Māori farming collective formed in Tai Tokerau / Northland is the Te Hiku Farm Collective. The purpose of the project, funded and led by MPI, is to sustainably increase productivity through the development of a collective of Te Hiku farms. It comprised an estimated 17,000ha of land across nine farms currently in Iwi Māori ownership and / or being

²⁰ Northland Inc, Extension 350 Annual Report 2019 – 2020. p.6.

returned as part of their Treaty settlement. These farms are Sweetwater Farms, Kaimaumau Farms, Paponga, Waireia Trust, Tapuwae Trust, Te Raite Station, Cape View Station, Wairahi Farm, and Parengarenga Inc.²¹

In a Rural News article dated April 2016, Rangitane Marsden then chief executive of Ngai Takoto, outlined the Te Hiku (Tai Tokerau) sheep and beef farming collective's strategy that was to:

- seek scale for marketing and branding,
- to create local employment and career development and
- to gain bargaining power in strategic partnerships with processors.

One particular goal was to intensify meat production to create jobs in the processing sector the rationale being the milk production may add a couple of jobs with each dairy platform "[b]ut beef could bring 200-300 jobs in the processing sector."

Te Hiku Farming Collective's intention was to farm with the long term goals of sustainability, efficiency and to grow the local economy, before anyone else's. The Collective's aspirations are better utilisation of their land to benefit its people, not just Maori, but the entire Northland economy. Scale would bring influence in terms of opportunities for processing, marketing and branding.

Brenton-Rule's report for the RMPP identifies four groupings of Māori farming entities:

- Tier 1 – those that have built their business and are seeking to grow outside the farm gate (largely incorporations);
- Tier 2 - properties are still in the development phase.
- Tier 3 – Māori land that is administered by the Māori Trustee
- Tier 4 – individually owned farms.

Tier 1 Māori farms are creating wealth and some have created processing capability e.g. for dairy (Miraka) and sheep and beef (Mangatu Blocks Incorporation). Miraka is an example of a Māori landowners who have collectivised to form a milk processing business. Its Māori shareholders include Tuaropaki Kaitiaki Trust, Wairarapa Moana Incorporation, Te Awahohonu Forest Trust, Waipapa 9 Trust, Hauhungaroa Partnership, and Tauhara Moana Trust.

Brenton-Rule notes that the Tier 2 group of Māori agriculturalists is the group that RMPP should have dealt with. In Tai Tokerau these are likely a mix of Incorporations and Ahu Whenua Trusts.²²

In respect of training, the Te Hiku (Tai Tokerau) Collective formed a relationship with Ngāpuhi iwi over the farm training school at Northland College. The school would be reinvented with a dairy and a beef platform and rather than replicate a farming training school in Te Hiku o te Ika (Te Hiku) they intend to send their rangatahi to Northland College. NorthTec and Telford [polytechnic] would provide the qualifications.

²¹ <https://www.ruralnewsgroup.co.nz/rural-news/rural-general-news/northland-iwi-farm-collective-raises-prospect-of-a-national-vision>

²² Brenton-Rule. T., 'Red Meat Profit Partnership Māori Engagement Strategy Report', Sept 2020. p.11.

"The goal is to create a primary sector centre of excellence around Northland and the Northland College area."

Due to time constraints, this aspect wasn't canvassed thoroughly, however, it would be useful to know what the work force requirements are for whenua Māori farmers and Crown-owned farms to inform a region-wide farming skills and training plan. This in turn could be linked to and inform the Tai Tokerau Northland Regional Growth Study and supporting Economic Action Plan. Atihau-Whanganui Incorporation has a live-in training programme for rangatahi Māori on its farms near Raetihi and Ohakune and identified strategic pathways for development and succession.²³

Value Chain

One of the Te Hiku Collective's aims is to capture the value chain "... to get outside the gate once we've got our scale and ourselves organised. We want to get into diversification... anything that can break the product down to a whole lot of other opportunities. And also create more employment opportunities. This echoes what the Miraka and other collectives have done.

There is very little other published material since this news article, however, the Tai Tokerau Northland Economic Action Plan (2019 Refresh, v2.0) encourages investment in the development Māori red meat strategy. 'He Tangata, He Whenua, He Oranga: The Tai Tokerau Growth Strategy' acknowledges more recent efforts to rebuild a strong Māori economy spearheaded by collectively owned Māori land and assets that are successfully managed by iwi, hapū and whānau entities, generating commercial returns from activities largely centred around primary sector activities: farming, forestry and fishing.

Agriculture				
Implement the Extension 350 project throughout Northland	Nthid Inc	MPI, Dairy NZ, NRC & Beef + Lamb NZ	2017 - 2022	Delivery
Implement the Te Tai Tokerau Māori Farming Collective with the focus on developing a Māori red meat strategy	Te Tai Tokerau Māori Farming Collective	Te Hiku Iwi, Māori Incorps & Trusts, MPI, TPK, JTHWP	2019 - 2021	Planning

Figure 3: Land and Water project workstream: Agriculture²⁴

Other Collectives

Other primary sector collectives in Tai Tokerau, who may have learnings to share, are the Tai Tokerau Miere Collective, and the Totara industry pilots. The hallmarks of these collectives are the cultural values that underpin commercial and strategic aspirations (moemoea).

²³ Atihau-Whanganui Incorporation, Awhiwhenua page: <https://www.atihau.com/awhiwhenua>

²⁴ Tai Tokerau Northland Economic Action Plan 2019 refresh, p.19.

CASE STUDY: WAIMA TOPU B TRUST

Purpose

The case study component of this report is intended to provide background and insight into the nature of Māori land tenure, specifically lands in Waima collectively owned by whānau and administered by the Waima Topu B Ahu Whenua Trust.

Background

Waima Topu B Ahu Whenua Trust (the Trust) administers this whenua tuku iho (lands passed down) on behalf of the 500+ owners.

The strategic vision of the Trust is:

Pupuri te whenua o Te Mahurehure

Holding onto the lands of Te Mahurehure

The Trust has recently established a fully owned subsidiary Waima Topu Beef (approx. 360 ha's effective) with a board of directors charged with running and operating the farm. Board members are mostly Trust board members along with an independent skills-based director with farming expertise.

The vision of taking control back of the whenua and standing up the farm is on its way to becoming a tangible reality. The aim is to have a sustainable business that considers the values of the owners and matches that with a commercial farm model that enhances mana i te whenua – mana and pride derived from a deep connection to our ancestral lands and exercise of kaitiaki (stewardship) over it.

Unfortunately, prior to the decision to return to day-to-day management of the farm, the whenua had been allowed to run down under previous operators. The challenge of developing the land into a farm, operating at optimum levels, is significant. Since commencing this journey, some great strides have been made.

Up until January 2020 the farm had been under multiple lease arrangements for almost 30 years. This is not uncommon in Tai Tokerau or in respect of Māori land management arrangements. Since then the Trust has ceased large-scale lease arrangements and has now charged Waima Topu Beef to farm the land on it's behalf. To support this transition to farming the Trust was successful at securing a grant from the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) to develop the farm. The development project is currently 85% of the way through and will be completed in early 2022. Development has focussed on installing a new water system, significant fencing along with considerable roading and track groundwork, new cattle yards, drainage, gorse removal and capital fertiliser application.

The board is assisted by a General Hand, casual staff and contractors through to Jan 2022 and supported by AgFirst (project managers). In the last 12 months the Trust has participated in TPK's Whenua Advisory Programme focused on benchmarking farm performance, governance and farm environment plan.

The shareholders are very motivated and excited by the prospects of farming their own whenua.

The settlement of Waima

Waima is a community in the south Hokianga region of Tai Tokerau (Northland) situated below the Whakatere and Manawakaiaia ranges. The kaiaia is Te Mahurehure hapū dialect that describes the female kāhū, otherwise known as the native New Zealand swamp harrier.

Whakatere Manawakaiaia conceptualises a meaning detailing:

- migration/navigation, whakatere;
- heart/power of endurance, manawa; and
- female kāhū, Kaiaia.

It is a fertile area with the Waima river running through the valley where it joins with the Punakitere river flowing into the Hokianga Harbour. State Highway 12 runs through the settlement.

Waima is made up of 95 whānau (135 households) amongst a population of approx. 200. The nearest town is Kaikohe with a population of 4000 within the Far North sub-region comprising approx. 60,000.

In the 19th century the rangatira of Te Mahurehure and Te Urikaiwhare was Mohi Tawhai. He was a signatory to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 and was known as the peace maker of the North. Waima is the site of a mid-nineteenth century Wesleyan mission which is memorialised by the Mission Oak planted by John Warren in 1839 and a site of timber milling in the 1870s. Waima School was established in 1881. In 1898, the people of Waima gained notoriety when they refused to pay a tax on dogs under the Dog Registration Act and marched on Rawene in what became known as the Dog Tax Rebellion, a resistance led by Hone Toia.





Figure 5: Waima Valley looking south west to Whakaterere Manawakiaiaia ranges



Figure 6: Waima River

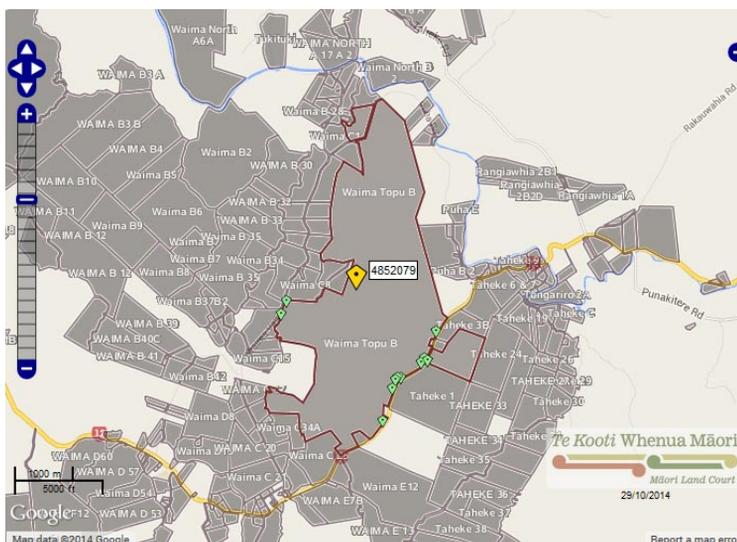


Figure 7: Multiply-owned Māori land holdings (shaded grey) in Waima. Waima Topu B block outlined in red

Te Mahurehure hapū from Waima have a very large population (estimates range has high as 30,000); many whānau have left the area over the past few generations in search of work and education. This is evidenced by the establishment of Te Mahurehure marae in Pt Chevalier, Auckland. From the 1930-1960s the Waima area was a thriving dairy farming community but as the economy and socio-political environment changed, people left the area for work. Accordingly, the three marae are very important culturally for many thousands who make regular pilgrimages back for tangihanga, holidays and other cultural and social events. At times the population of Waima will swell to the thousands as whānau travel 'home' for important events.

Hokianga - Taniwha Rau

Traditional history from the period of Nukutawhiti and Ruanui (progeny of Kupe) says that Moehau (also known as Waima) is the offspring of Araiteuru and Niniwa who were taniwha or esoteric beings that lived under or beside oceans, harbours, lakes and rivers. Taniwha can shape-shift and become a log, dolphin, orca or any other fish. Our Waima taniwha is sometimes called Waima and sometimes Moehau and can be a giant totara log and then can change into a small fish to get into its home, a freshwater spring flowing into that part of the tidal river. Hence its name changes.²⁵ It is traditions and oral histories such as these that inform our engagement with te Taiao (the natural world) and underpin cultural values such as kaitiakitanga (stewardship of the land) that plays a strong hand in diverse approaches to management of our whenua, farm business and environmental planning.

Ko to mātou tuakiri

Uewhati, son of Uenukuare, son of Rahiri is the progenitor of Te Mahurehure. He had several pā sites in Waima. The most well-known one was called after his death Te Pā o Uewhati (the fort of Uewhati) on top of the highest peak of the mountain chain now called Whakatere Manawakaiaia. He died at a battle at a lower pā site called Manawakaiaia, in Waima and some of his koiwi (bones) are in the burial caves called Orangitōa.

Te Mahurehure hapū name comes from the Battle of Moremonui. Te Roherohe, fighting chief of the group from Waima and surrounding areas, crossed the forests and a scout was sent down to check the beach. He reported that it was crowded with warriors. Te Roherohe gave a proverbial statement:

He mana anō ki te ora. Me hoki Mahurehure tātou

There is sense in staying alive. Let us filter back in twos and threes.

That name replaced Ngāti Uewhati which has become dormant.

History of the Waima Topu B Ahu Whenua Trust

The Waima Topu B Trust is an Ahu Whenua trust established in June 1981. The whenua managed by the Trust comprise 890 hectares spread across five blocks in Waima, Hokianga. See Figure 7 above. The land blocks are a mix of Māori and freehold title land. Today there are 500+ owners holding 15,000 shares. The owners predominantly whakapapa to Te Mahurehure and Ngāti Pakau hapū (an estimated 30,000 tribal members) who affiliate to local marae: Otatara, Tuhirangi, Moehau and Tahekeroa and the taurahere (urban) marae, Mahurehure in Pt Chevalier, Auckland.

²⁵ Adapted from Hohepa, Patu. 'Hokianga: From Te Korekore to 1840', Jan 2011. Waitangi Tribunal, Wai 1040, #E36

Historical Background of the Waima Topu B Trust

Physical development of the land for farming purposes began with a number of residents in 1933. Assistance was given by the Crown for the ‘development of the lands left to the natives’ and some were given stock for their holdings and their share of profits was used to reduce mortgages incurred, building houses and cowsheds. In the early 1940s the farm was controlled by the Department of Native Affairs. The Waima Development Scheme was established in 1958. In July of that year, the owners elected an Advisory Committee comprising five members in respect of the lands. Profits were declared during 1948-1955 and again from 1963-1966.

In October 1963 an owner’s meeting suggested that the Department of Māori Affairs buy the farm, which by now was known as the ‘base farm’ in accordance with the department’s policy of using the block to provide stock for local farms and its other developmental blocks.

On 6 June 1981, the Department of Maori Affairs convened a meeting of owners at Te Mahurehure marae in Auckland. The owners agreed to resume control as a section 438 Trust (under the Maori Affairs Act 1953) and was duly confirmed by the Maori Land Court. The Waima Development Scheme shares were transferred to the trustees of Waima Topu B Trust. The original Trustees were Graham Wilcox (Chair), Pat Hohepa (Secretary), Heemi Toia (Treasurer), Dave Harding, Dave Toia and Mara Wharerau (Trustees).

The Waima Topu B Trustees managed the whenua as best they could, however, due to debts attracted on blocks that were amalgamated into the Waima Topu B block the stock and chattels which were on the property were sold (brought by the Waima Topu B development scheme) and proceeds credited to the mortgage on the land.

Over the decades the Trust has had its ups and downs but has managed to break free from debt acquired under Māori Affairs’ management, and purchased more land reflecting its vision to ‘hold on’ to whenua in Waima. Since the late 1980s, over a dozen papakāinga homes have been built on the whenua by owners to house their whānau. On the downside, the Trust eventually chose not to sustain its own farming operation, and in the early 1990s leased the farm to a series of farmers.

In 1988 the Waima Topu B Trust granted a forestry right to Taitokerau Forests Limited of approximately 190 hectares for 30 years (until 17 March 2018). In 2016 the Trust sold its forest for a healthy return; which is why it is able to co-invest in the farm development today.

The Trust’s Vision statement ‘Pūpuri te whenua o Te Mahurehure / Holding on to the lands of Te Mahurehure’ is grounded in the maumahara (memory) of landloss suffered subsequent to the signing Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840. The overwhelming majority of Māori whose roots (haukainga) are in Hokianga can no longer live in Hokianga, even if they wanted to. They are many and live in the cities and urban centres such as Kaikohe, Whangarei, Auckland, Hamilton,

Wellington, Christchurch and megacities such as Sydney, Australia. Hokianga is described as a ‘landscape of deprivation’ and is referred to as one of the ‘most socio-economically deprived communities in New Zealand’.²⁶

Since the post WWII pastoral and industrial expansion most jobs in the area revolve around servicing, construction, tourism, forestry and farming for the majority. Others relocated to the cities in the 1950s and 1960s following deliberate government policies of relocation and assimilation. Whānau continue to return during mini-crises – labour, housing, the impacts of drugs and violence - to live in substandard conditions.

In essence, the cultural world of their ancestors has also been largely excised from their memory, hearts and daily lives. Most live under a cloud of cultural and historical ignorance through no fault of their own. Despite this it is largely through their own endeavours to counter the effects of colonization that the land remains. That the Trust has managed to retain the lands for whānau in itself is remarkable.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi / the Treaty of Waitangi

Ngāpuhi iwi and hapū who represent the vast number of Māori in Tai Tokerau are in the unenviable position of having suffered every kind of Crown breach of Te Tiriti o Waitangi for the longest time. They are yet to receive far-reaching historical redress. Sustained investment, similar to Provincial Growth Funding, will assist to grow opportunities and capacity in the meantime.

Ngāpuhi iwi and hapū continue to strive to achieve recognition and pursue compensation for historic injustices through the Treaty of Waitangi historic settlement process. Despite the relatively marginal quantum value of the settlements, many within Tai Tokerau hold out hope that some form of economic recovery might be stimulated through ‘sensible application of these settlement assets’.²⁷

Conclusion

Recent investment through initiatives such as MBIE’s Provincial Growth Fund, TPK’s Whenua Māori Programme and MPI’s Te Hiku Farming Collective have created an uplift in activity for some Māori farmers in Tai Tokerau. Collectively held land interests including Māori and Crown-owned farms represent a considerable asset-base, offering scale and potential for the primary sector in Tai Tokerau.

There are dozens of reports commissioned by government agencies providing insights, analysis and recommendations about the nature and land use potential of whenua Māori. Much of the

²⁶ Ibid, p.332, Hauora Hokianga “Degrees of Deprivation in New Zealand, 2010”.

²⁷ (“2019 REFRESH VERSION 2.0 Tai Tokerau Northland Economic Action Plan,” n.d.)

literature is grounded in activating the land to grow GDP and focusses on Māori land generally. Some reports are specific to the Tai Tokerau region and a handful that focus on the mid-North and Hokianga area where Waima Topu B Ahu Whenua Trust is located. More recently, literature informed by Māori academics, scientists, farmers and leaders is shaping a more diverse, values-based approach to pastoral farming. This value-based proposition and concepts such as guardianship and multi-generational sustainability are being reflected more and more by the wider industry in its marketing, both domestically and internationally; with mixed results. Once derogatory perceptions of Māori land are yielding to the emergence of world-class Māori farming operations. This is the modern-day expression of the potential of the partnership embodied in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. However, there is more work to do.

Pāmu farms are likely to come back to hapū through the Ngāpuhi Treaty settlement process. The settlement itself is a barrier to building farm-based talent and skills as it relies on physical hand-back of the asset post-settlement.

More could be done now to enable hapū to engage and learn how to govern and operate Crown-owned assets in their rohe ahead of the settlement. Atihau-Whanganui Incorporation are an exemplar of training next generation farmers within the context of farming whenua Māori. Similarly, Mangatu Incorporation's vertical integration including ownership of whenua, stock and processing plant is a model that Tai Tokerau Māori farmers would benefit from greatly. Forming strategic relationships based on whanaungatanga and manaaki would enable development of a flight plan to grow the Tai Tokerau Māori farming sector.

Tupu Tonu and Tumu Paeroa have important roles to play to joint venture with Māori land asset holders to bridge the equity finance gap.

If the momentum generated by the PGF investment in whenua Māori farms is seen to be positive and worth then a credible plan to support Tier 2 farms, or those in the development stage, is needed. As such it is recommended that a Business Case for investment is developed for collectively owned Māori land blocks with potential to transition to high performing units. Rather than collectivising from the outset, initial steps would comprise collaboration between a small number of 2-3 whenua Māori farms. Through the concept of whanaungatanga, the group would explore opportunities for Tai Tokerau whenua Māori farmers to collaborate in the agriculture sector.

The prize for Tai Tokerau and Aotearoa New Zealand is considerable. The challenge for us now is to look the taniwha in the face and hear what it is telling us.

Recommendations: Pathways to Success

- Develop a business case for investment for Tier 2 (developing whenua Māori farms) focussed on:
 - Investment in infrastructure
 - Capability – governance and skills and training
- Based on principles of whanangatanga and manaaki, engage with farmers of collectively-owned Māori land in Tai Tokerau to identify levels of interest in collaborating.
- Convene wānanga for sharing knowledge, experience and information.
- Discuss options with a wider group of Māori landowners, then other relevant parties.
- Initially focus on collaboration with a long term view to:
 - Grow the number of high performing Māori farms in Tai Tokerau
 - Grow the number of unutilised and/or under-utilised neighbouring blocks into production
 - Establish and strengthen the relationship between Māori farmers and Pāmu with a view to successful transition to iwi hapū management
 - Identify and develop options for Tier 1 enterprises that allow multiple farms to come together to work collectively to add value to, and de-risk, the value chain from farm gate to consumer.

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